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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [AL](#) [MK](#) [HR](#) [NATO](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: CROATIA OPPOSES TIRANA'S ADRIATIC CHARTER MOU

REF: TIRANA 01195

CLASSIFIED BY: POLOFF JUSTIN FRIEDMAN FOR REASONS 1.5 B & D

11. (C) SUMMARY: CROATIA IS OPPOSED TO SIGNING THE ALBANIAN-PROPOSED MOU (REFTEL) ON IMPLEMENTING THE ADRIATIC CHARTER IN ITS PRESENT FORM. MFA AND MOD INTERLOCUTORS ASKED FOR U.S. VIEWS ON THE DRAFT MOU BEFORE CROATIA TAKES A FIRM POSITION, BUT THEIR INITIAL READ OF THE MOU IS THAT IT GOES BEYOND THE INTENT AND SCOPE OF THE CHARTER. MOD TOLD US THAT THE GOC VIEWED THE CHARTER AS A POLITICAL DOCUMENT, AND ITS PREFERENCE WAS TO FOCUS INDIVIDUAL PREPARATIONS FOR NATO OVER BILATERAL OR MULTILATERAL EXERCISES WITH CHARTER PARTNERS.

12. (C) POST BELIEVES WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE CHARTER PARTNERS TO WORK OUT AMONG THEMSELVES HOW BEST TO IMPLEMENT THE CHARTER. WE WILL BE ASKED TO PROVIDE LOGISTICAL OR OTHER DIRECT SUPPORT IF OUR INTENTION IS TO ENCOURAGE JOINT OR BILATERAL EXERCISES UNDER THE CHARTER. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL, POLOFF AND NAVY ATTACHE MET SEPARATELY WITH MFA ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE NORTH AMERICA DESK ANDREA BEKIC AND ASSISTANT MINISTER OF DEFENSE JELENA GRIC-POLIC ON AUGUST 12. BOTH INTERLOCUTORS ASKED FOR THE U.S. POSITION BEFORE RESPONDING FORMALLY TO THE ALBANIAN PROPOSAL. WE STATED THAT WHILE WE ENCOURAGED REGIONAL COOPERATION, WE WANTED TO HEAR CROATIA'S VIEWS ON THE MOU BEFORE COMING TO A POSITION OURSELVES.

14. (C) ASSISTANT MINISTER GRIC-POLIC TOLD US THAT CROATIA VIEWS THE CHARTER PRIMARILY AS A POLITICAL DOCUMENT, AND NOT A MILITARY INSTRUMENT. IN A FOLLOW UP CONVERSATION WITH NAVY ATTACHE AUGUST 13, GRIC-POLIC SHARPENED HER POINTS, EMPHASIZING THAT WHILE SHE WAS STILL LOOKING FOR USG VIEWS, THE MOD FOUND THE PROPOSED MOU UNACCEPTABLE IN ITS PRESENT FORM, AS IT WOULD TAKE THE RELATIONSHIP TO A DIFFERENT LEVEL.8 EARLIER, SHE TOLD US CROATIAN POLICY WAS TO FOCUS ITS LIMITED RESOURCES ON REGIONAL MULTILATERAL MILITARY COOPERATION WITH MEMBERS OF THE QUADRILATERALE (ITALY, SLOVENIA, HUNGARY AND CROATIA), SPECIFICALLY THE MULTINATIONAL LAND FORCE (MLF), RATHER THAN CHARTER PARTNERS. SHE NOTED THAT CROATIAN FORCES COULD LEARN MORE FROM THESE ACTIVITIES THAN FROM EXERCISES WITH NON-CONTIGUOUS, LESS MILITARILY ADVANCED REGIONAL PARTNERS. GRIC-POLIC STRESSED THAT THE CHARTER EMPHASIZED INDIVIDUAL PARTNERS' PREPARATIONS FOR NATO AND POINTED OUT THE CROATIA WOULD BE BETTER POSITIONED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTIVITIES PROPOSED IN THE MOU ONCE IT HAD MOVED CLOSER TO NATO. SHE UNDERScoreD THE U.S. HAD A KEY ROLE IN THE "U.S.-ADRIATIC CHARTER" AND THAT GIVEN THE REGION'S GEOGRAPHY, A U.S. SUPPORT ROLE WAS ESSENTIAL TO MAKING ANY PROPOSED MULTILATERAL EXERCISE HAPPEN.

15. (C) WITH KEY MFA SUBSTANTIVE EXPERTS ON VACATION, MFA,S BEKIC WAS RELUCTANT TO PROVIDE ANY VIEWS ON THE MATTER, BUT DID STATE THAT THE MFA,S INITIAL REACTION WAS THAT THE ALBANIAN PROPOSAL WENT BEYOND THE INTENT OF THE CHARTER. SHE ADDED THAT IN GENERAL, CROATIA WANTED TO KEEP TO THE CHARTER IN ITS CURRENT FORM AND DID NOT WANT TO OVEREMPHASIZE THE PROCESS.

16. (C) COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT, DESPITE OUR INTERLOCUTORS, INITIAL NEGATIVE COMMENTS, CROATIA WOULD BE WILLING TO SIGN SOMETHING LESS THAN AN MOU TO AVOID GENERATING ILL-WILL WITH THE U.S. AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, THE PECULIARITIES OF CROATIAN LAW WOULD ULTIMATELY REQUIRE THAT THE SABOR RATIFY ANY MOU, MAKING A LESS FORMAL "MILITARY COOPERATION PLAN" POLITICALLY MORE DESIRABLE. GRIC-POLIC,S COMMENTS ON THE NEED FOR U.S. LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR ANY CHARTER-LINKED EXERCISES SHOULD BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. WITHOUT SUCH ASSISTANCE ONLY BILATERAL CROATIAN-ALBANIAN NAVAL EXERCISES WOULD BE PRACTICAL GIVEN CHARTER MEMBERS LACK OF TRANSPORT ASSETS FOR GROUND FORCES. WE BELIEVE THE U.S. SHOULD CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE COOPERATION, BUT LEAVE IT TO THE CHARTER PARTNERS TO WORK OUT WHAT FORMS THIS SHOULD TAKE.
FRANK

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